

RHODE ISLAND
BEGINNING TEACHER STANDARDS

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The Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards

Introduction

Ensuring that ALL Rhode Island children learn and perform at high levels requires excellence in teaching. Becoming an excellent teacher is a developmental process. Beginning teachers bring a variety of academic, social, and cultural experiences to their classrooms. As they learn more about their students, their schools, and their communities, they are able to take their developing practice from a solid foundation to higher levels of expertise. For teachers to become expert, they must at least begin with an awareness of the kinds of knowledge and understandings necessary to develop as professionals. Achieving, and then maintaining, excellence as a teacher requires a life-long commitment to continuous professional development.

The Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards were developed by a committee of teachers, administrators, and teacher educators from across the state to create a vision of teaching excellence. The standards articulate what excellent teachers do to promote learning. These teachers create meaningful learning experiences that reflect the central ideas of disciplines and capitalize on student interests. Their instruction reflects an understanding of the content they teach and of the different ways in which students learn. They accommodate those differences so that all students can achieve. The development of critical thinking and problem solving skills is an integral part of learning in their classrooms. They create learning environments that transform classrooms of students into learning communities. Exploration, conjecture, and discussion become vehicles to investigate new ideas in their classrooms. They use assessment to promote the continuous development of learners and they continue to learn along with and in service of their students.

Teachers must have an in-depth understanding of their content in order to bring the Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards to life. The Beginning Teacher Standards, however, are teaching, rather than content standards. Standards for content knowledge are a necessary complement to these standards.

The eleven standards are presented on the pages that follow. Each standard is supported by several indicators which illustrate in greater detail the kinds of performances that comprise that standard. The indicators are meant to explicate the standard and convey the thinking of the committee responsible for drafting the standards. Committee members agree that as we continue in the development of a standards based system, assessments need to be developed which will define acceptable performance for beginning teachers. Institutions of higher education need to evaluate teacher education programs in light of these standards and develop appropriate assessments of teacher candidates that will provide evidence that these standards have been met.

RHODE ISLAND BEGINNING TEACHER STANDARDS

Standard 1. Teachers create learning experience using a broad base of general knowledge that reflects an understanding of the nature of the world in which we live.

Standard 2. Teachers create learning experiences that reflect an understanding of the central concepts, structures, and tools of inquiry of the disciplines they teach.

Standard 3. Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect an understanding of how children learn and develop.

Standard 4. Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect a respect for the diversity of learners and an understanding of how students differ in their approaches to learning.

Standard 5. Teachers create instructional opportunities to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

Standard 6. Teachers create a learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

Standard 7. Teachers foster collaborative relationships with colleagues and families to support students' learning.

Standard 8. Teachers use effective communication as the vehicle through which students explore, conjecture, discuss, and investigate new ideas.

Standard 9. Teachers use a variety of formal and informal assessment strategies to support the continuous development of the learner.

Standard 10. Teachers reflect on their practice and assume responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking opportunities to learn and grow as professionals.

Standard 11. Teachers maintain professional standards guided by legal and ethical principles.

Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards

Standard 1: Teachers create learning experiences using a broad base of general knowledge that reflects an understanding of the nature of the world in which we live.

Teachers...

- 1.1 reflect a variety of academic, social, and cultural experiences in their teaching.
- 1.2 use a broad knowledge base to create interdisciplinary learning experiences.
- 1.3 exhibit a commitment to learning about the changes in their disciplines and in our world that models a commitment to lifelong learning for students.

Standard 2: Teachers create learning experiences that reflect an understanding of central concepts, structures, and tools of inquiry of the disciplines they teach.

Teachers...

- 2.1 know their discipline and understand how knowledge in their discipline is created, organized, and linked to other disciplines.
- 2.2 Design instruction that addresses the core skills, concepts, and ideas of the disciplines to help students meet the goals of the Rhode Island Common Core of Learning.
- 2.3 select instructional materials and resources based on their comprehensiveness, accuracy, and usefulness for representing particular ideas and concepts.
- 2.4 incorporate appropriate technological resources to support student exploration of the disciplines.
- 2.5 use a variety of explanations and multiple representations of concepts, including analogies, metaphors, experiments, demonstrations, and illustrations, that help students develop conceptual understanding.
- 2.6 represent and use differing viewpoints, theories, and methods of inquiry when teaching concepts.
- 2.7 generate multiple paths to knowledge and encourage students to see, question, and interpret concepts from a variety of perspectives.

Standard 3: Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect an understanding of how children learn and develop.

Teachers...

- 3.1 understand how students learn -- how students construct knowledge, acquire skills, develop habits of mind, and acquire positive dispositions toward learning.
- 3.2 design instruction that meets the current cognitive, social, and personal needs of their students.
- 3.3 create lessons and activities that meet the variety of developmental levels of students within a class.

Standard 4: Teachers create instructional opportunities that reflect a respect for the diversity of learners and an understanding of how students differ in their approaches to learning.

Teachers...

- 4.1 design instruction that accommodates individual differences (e.g., stage of development, learning style, English language acquisition, learning disability) in approaches to learning.
- 4.2 use their understanding of students (e.g., individual interests, prior learning, cultural experiences) to create connections between the subject matter and student experiences.
- 4.3 seek information about the impact of students' specific challenges to learning or disabilities on classroom performance, and work with specialists to develop alternative instructional strategies to meet the needs of these students.
- 4.4 make appropriate accommodations (e.g., in terms of time and circumstances for work, tasks assigned) for individual students who have identified learning differences or needs in an Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

Standard 5: Teachers create instructional opportunities to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

Teachers...

- 5.1 design lessons that extend beyond factual recall and challenge students to develop higher level cognitive skills.
- 5.2 pose questions that encourage students to view, analyze, and interpret ideas from multiple perspectives.
- 5.3 make instructional decisions about when to provide information, when to clarify, when to pose a question, and when to let a student struggle to try to solve a problem.
- 5.4 engage students in generating knowledge, testing hypotheses, and exploring methods of inquiry and standards of evidence.
- 5.5 use tasks that engage students in exploration, discovery, and hands-on activities.

Standard 6: Teachers create a learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

Teachers...

- 6.1 use principles of effective classroom management to establish classrooms in which clear rules and standards of behavior are maintained.
- 6.2 establish a safe and secure learning environment.
- 6.3 organize and allocate the resources of materials and physical space to support active engagement of students.
- 6.4 provide and structure the time necessary to explore important concepts and ideas.
- 6.5 help students establish a classroom environment characterized by mutual respect and intellectual risk-taking.
- 6.6 create learning groups in which students learn to work collaboratively and independently.
- 6.7 communicate clear expectations for achievement that allow students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Standard 7: Teachers foster collaborative relationships with colleagues and families to support students' learning.

Teachers...

- 7.1 work collaboratively with their colleagues (e.g., other grade-level, content, special education, ESL teachers, teacher assistants) to create a learning community that benefits all students.
- 7.2 develop relationships with parents/guardians to support student learning.
- 7.3 understand the role of community agencies in supporting schools
- 7.4 understand state, district and school initiatives (e.g. School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT), Statewide Student Performance Assessments) to effect educational improvement.

Standard 8: Teachers use effective communication as the vehicle through which students explore, conjecture, discuss, and investigate new ideas.

Teachers...

- 8.1 use a variety of communication strategies (e.g., restating ideas, questioning, offering counter examples) to engage students in learning.
- 8.2 use a variety of modes of communication (e.g., verbal, visual, kinesthetic) to promote learning.
- 8.3 use technological advances in communication, including electronic means of collecting and sharing information, to enrich discourse in the classroom.
- 8.4 emphasize oral and written communication through the instructional use of discussion, listening and responding to the ideas of others, and group interaction.

Standard 9: Teachers use a variety of formal and informal assessment strategies to support the continuous development of the learner.

Teachers....:

- 9.1 gather information about their students (e.g., experiences, interests, learning styles, and prior knowledge) from parents/guardians, colleagues and the students themselves.
- 9.2 use a variety of assessment strategies and instruments (e.g., observation, portfolio, teacher made tests, self assessments) that are aligned with instructional content and methodology.
- 9.3 encourage students to evaluate their own work and use the results of this self-assessment to establish individual goals for learning.
- 9.4 maintain records of student learning and communicate student progress to students, parents/guardians, and other colleagues.
- 9.5 use information from their assessment of students to reflect on their own teaching and to modify their instruction.

Standard 10: Teachers reflect on their practice and assume responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking opportunities to learn and grow as professionals.

Teachers...

- 10.1 solicit feedback from students, families, and colleagues to evaluate their own teaching.
- 10.2 read ideas presented in professional publications and discuss current issues in education.
- 10.3 explore new instructional approaches and strategies, including technological, in the classroom.
- 10.4 take responsibility for their own professional growth by participating in workshops, courses, or other educational activities that support their plans for continued development as teachers.

Standard 11: Teachers maintain professional standards guided by legal and ethical principles.

Teachers...

- 11.1 maintain standards that require them to act in the best interests and needs of students.
- 11.2 follow school policy and procedures, respecting the boundaries of their professional responsibilities, when working with students, colleagues, and families.
- 11.3 follow local, state, and federal law pertaining to educational and instructional issues, including regulations related to students' and teachers' rights and students' and teachers' responsibilities.
- 11.4 interact with students, colleagues, parents, and others in a professional manner that is fair and equitable.
- 11.5 are guided by codes of professional conduct adopted by their professional organizations.